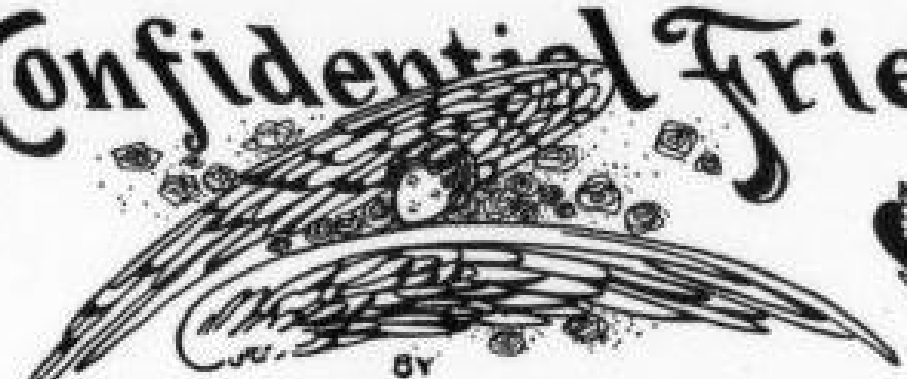
My Confidential Friend



BY

Margaret Busbee Shipp

January 6th, 1910.

I WAS so excited over being maid of honor and the crush at the reception kept me so busy that not until Grace's mother whispered that it was time for her to put on her traveling dress did I realize that the end had come. I just clung to Grace a minute, and she held me as fast. An elderly man who had been talking to me remarked: "What a beautiful friendship! Blonde and brunette!"

To have our love put on so low a plane as a mere contrast in type was unbearable, and I turned to him and said: "Poor worldling!"

He looked as amazed as if a lamb had suddenly barked at him, and as Grace went upstairs with Mrs. Hooper, a man drew my arm through his.

"I am going to take you to get something cool," he said.

But he didn't; he took me out to the little place screened off by long-leaf pines, and I hardly managed to get there before I burst out crying. He must have seen it coming. I sobbed until I felt that an explanation was due him, and I told him that I was facing absolute loneliness. I explained that I had lived at the university town where dad was professor of Greek until we came here a month ago because dad wanted to give all his time to some important work. He said that all the graduates of the university honored dad as the purest type of scholar the State had produced.

"But I haven't anybody to confide in now that Grace is going away," I went on, "for dad is always busy in his study, and when I can make him listen, he takes things so seriously."

"Things like what?"

"Like boys making love to me," I explained. "There was a law student whom we thought in love with Grace, and when it proved to be me, I hated to talk to Grace about it because it seemed like boasting, so I went to dad, and he said: 'The impudent young puppy! I will tell him to stop annoying you!' It was difficult to make him understand that I *liked* it. You see, I have been here to visit Grace, and she has spent all her vacations with me, and now just as I came here to live, she marries and goes to Georgia! If you've ever had a devoted friend marry and have felt that you couldn't talk freely to him any more because he'd tell his wife, you can understand how lonely I am now. And all the students I know best have—nearly all of them, that is, who——"

I stopped short, and felt myself turning pink in the hateful way I do, but he understood.

"Of course that would debar them from being impartial confidants," he remarked thoughtfully. "Would you consider me? You can rely on my silence, and I'll vouch for my interest."

"I—I hadn't thought of a middle-aged person," I admitted. "I am afraid my confidences would sound frivolous to you."

Mr. Channing said that, though he confessed to thirty-one years, he re-

called his youthful emotions well enough to be sympathetic, and in the end we made a compact.

To-day he sent me this plump morocco volume, so that when he was out of town and I had an irresistible impulse to talk of intimate things, I could write them down here. I find that I like doing it—evidently a taste which I inherited from darling dad and his notebooks.

January 10th.

Mr. Channing called last evening, and even before he shook hands he exclaimed: "I see that you have something to tell me!"

That was very discerning, for I had received a letter from Herbert King that day. He graduates at the university this year. I started to read it to him, but Mr. Channing gave an exclamation when he saw that it was seventeen pages.

"Perhaps it would be fairer to the other fellow just to give me an outline of its contents? We won't call them by their real names, either, but run down the alphabet with them. Suppose we call the first man Adams; shall we?"

So I told him how Herbert "Adams" had been my devoted friend. I had worn his fraternity pin, and he had once said to me, most beautifully: "You are more to me than my sisters by blood, for that is the merest accident of birth, while you are my sister by the deliberate choice of my manhood."

Now that I've gone away he misses me so dreadfully he realizes that he cares for me in a still deeper way. Mr. Channing wanted to know what I had answered. Of course I wouldn't hurt Herbert's feelings for anything, so I wrote that I would tell him at Commencement, and in the meantime to be sure to go to see the Kenans and the Faisons every week. You see he likes Fanny Kenan tremendously, and if he saw a lot of her, by June he would probably be in love with her, and I shouldn't have to hurt his feelings at all. My confidential friend entirely approved of this course, and we had a long talk about all sorts of things.

January 19th.

The new governor was once a prize pupil of dad's, and his wife has asked me to be in the receiving line with her niece, at their first reception at the mansion. I was with their party the night of the inaugural ball, and the papers next day spoke of me as "the débuante who was the unrivaled belle of the occasion." Everybody is so nice to me that I begin to feel as much at home here as I did at the dear old university.

March 12th.

I've had the best time the last two months that I ever had in my life! I've been to parties, cotillions, and informal dances galore. Mr. Channing says the reason I have neglected my diary is that every time "I take my pen in hand" I have to thank somebody or other for flowers. Mr. Birch is especially attentive. He is quite old, older even than my confidential friend, and he has what the novels call "graying hair," though I think it looks rather mottled. He leads the germans, and rather arbitrates all social matters, and he is very, very cynical. Perhaps I was right when I called him a worldling that first night.

March 23rd.

So much happens, and it is so good to be alive! Who would have thought that Mr. Birch would? But he *did*, and I was so excited about it that I couldn't wait for Mr. Channing to come, and I telephoned to his office.

"It's B!" I cried, when he came to the receiver. "Oh, do hurry and come; you'll never guess!"

"I'll be there in four minutes," he replied, and in that time his runabout was at the door.

"It's a real B; it's Mr. Birch," I began. "I'm obliged to tell you the real name or you won't realize how thrilling it was. The only trouble is that it has spoiled me for sophomores' love-making forever! I realize now that theirs was very crude and obvious; they tell you everything, while Mr. Birch leaves you to infer so much, and it seems as if he doesn't want to tell you at all, as if it was just wrung from him!"

"He ought to be an adept by this time," Mr. Channing muttered, and he didn't seem to be as sympathetic as he was about Herbert.

"Now, Herbert calls me 'a star-eyed angel,' but Mr. Birch—what do you suppose?—says I'm 'cryptic,' 'subtle,' and 'a consummate little actress.'"

"His descriptions would be equally applicable to a year-old baby," Mr. Channing growled.

It provoked me, and I flashed back: "I know I'm only eighteen, but Mr. Birch treats me as if I were as old as —as Mrs. Bruce-Maxwell, and it's so encouraging."

"By the way"—he had quite a queer look—"I understand that you had another 'B' in train at the Stewarts' ball. I heard Bruce-Maxwell at the club next day declare that he had enjoyed a débutante for the first time in years."

"He danced with me a great deal." Then I burst forth with the whole truth. "As you are my intimate friend, I don't mind saying that I don't think it was at all tactful in him. You see, there were lots of young men who wanted to dance with me, and Mr. Bruce-Maxwell would insist on giving me all his leads, and he actually got rid of my own partner, Rob Hester, and took me in to supper himself. I tried to be polite, of course, but I hated to waste time at a dance talking to an old married person."

Mr. Channing threw back his head and shouted.

"Bruce has been regarded as the most dangerously attractive man in our community for so long that I imagine it was a downright delight to be treated like 'an old married person.'"

"He sent me the most gorgeous orchids yesterday. I knew, of course, it must be a mistake that Mrs. Bruce-Maxwell's card wasn't in with them, too, so I addressed my note of thanks to them both, and began it: 'My dear friends.'"

Mr. Channing looked as if he were going to laugh again, then he changed his mind and lifted my hand and kissed it. He has an odd, chivalrous fashion of doing that. I rather like it. It makes me feel like a princess in a book.

April 3rd.

People are so queer. There is an unattractive young man here, with a reddish-purplish face and hideous hair, so stiff and sandy. He dances awkwardly and doesn't talk about a thing but automobiles. Lately he has taken to sending me ten-pound boxes of candy, as if I were a wholesale house. Yesterday afternoon he called, and while he was there, Grace's mother came in. I said frankly:

"Mr. Ellerton, I want to talk about Grace, so I am going to send you away. Three people can't talk with any satisfaction, can they? And you can come again more easily than Mrs. Hooper, because she isn't strong."

Well, Mrs. Hooper looked perfectly aghast, and began to insist upon his staying. He laughed in his kind, hearty way, and said:

"Let her alone, Mrs. Hooper. She is pretty enough to afford to talk the straight truth. I'll be back again, probably before she wants me."

When he went out, Mrs. Hooper asked as solemnly as the catechism:

"Doris, don't you know that is John K. Ellerton's son, the richest man in the State? What would your father say to your behavior?"

I was frankly puzzled by her manner.

"As dad doesn't have to ask alms, I don't see what his having money has to do with us. He comes here so often that I am tired of talking to him, anyway. Do tell me about Grace."

Mrs. Hooper looked as interested as darling dad does over his Æschylus.

"I wonder what Nina Bruce-Maxwell will say when she learns of that? Nina must have an axe sharpened for you already because of Mr. Channing."

I suppose I looked as mystified as I felt, for she went on to explain:

"Nina has been trying to get Mr. Channing into her train ever since her marriage. But he is too busy, or too indifferent. This winter he has given more time to social matters than ever before, and every one declares it is be-

cause of you. You have certainly had a wonderfully successful first season, my dear. There's something piquant in your position, too, for your father is about as much of a chaperon as one of the books in his library. Of course Birch isn't a marrying man, but his approval gives a girl a certain stamp; and you have a veritable bodyguard among the younger set of dancing men, though I think you flirt with Robert Hester rather too openly. Mr. Channing, though the best parti here, taking everything into consideration, is absolutely cold-blooded, and I don't think he will marry. Still his attentions count, and the Bruce-Maxwells will probably take you into their set, if things go on this way."

But I interrupted her.

"I can't understand what you mean about Mrs. Bruce-Maxwell trying to get Mr. Channing into her train *after* she was married?"

I raised my voice in my excitement, and just then Mr. Channing himself came into the room.

"I am so glad to be in time to hear your elucidation, Mrs. Hooper," he said pleasantly.

She never made it, however, but stammered out something about my being such a child.

"I agree with you," he replied, and his voice was gentle and hard all at once, though it doesn't sound possible. "Such a clear-eyed, innocent child that I should think all the motherhood in all womankind would rise to protect and shelter her. Instead, they offer her a bite from the apple of the tree of knowledge, and are not even careful to observe whether or not the particular fruit in question has been first handled by the father of lies."

Mrs. Hooper left soon afterward, in a sort of apologetic flutter, and we never did have our talk about Grace. Mr. Channing came to where I was standing and took both my hands in his and drew me near him, and we stood there silent for a while, and I had that sense of being defended and sheltered that his friendship always gives me.

"You can protect yourself from the men, but I cannot protect you from the women," was all he said, but he looked tired and troubled.

I told him all of our conversation, about John K. Ellerton's son and all.

"Don't you think Mrs. Bruce-Maxwell is lovely?" I asked.

"Very," he returned absently. "Don't you?"

"I think she is the very prettiest woman I ever saw in my life."

"That's a fair exchange for Bruce-Maxwell's opinion of you."

At the memory of that I drew away my hands, and a queer lump came in my throat. For the other evening Mr. Bruce-Maxwell had appealed to Mr. Channing: "Isn't she a regular Greuze girl? The same delicacy of coloring, the same transparent, wistful loveliness, the same look of divine unworldliness."

And he, Mr. Channing, my best friend, had merely responded:

"One can stand before a Greuze picture in the National and discuss it—because it cannot hear. I don't think I can treat Miss Grey quite so impersonally."

Yet the fact remains that of every man I have met this winter, he is the only one who has never told me that he likes the way I look. I don't blame him. I think it surprising that anybody can care much about blue eyes. Mrs. Bruce-Maxwell's are large and dark.

April 12th.

Mr. Channing has been away on business and I have not seen him for two days. As he had telephoned that he would be up late in the afternoon, I cut short my ride with Mr. Ellerton in his big new car, and reached home just after he came.

"What's up now?" he asked. "From the tone of your voice over the phone, I knew something had occurred. Bobby Hester been making love again?"

I refused to discuss anything so frivolous, and announced:

"I am in the Bruce-Maxwell set!"

"God forbid!" he muttered, as I handed him the dainty note from Mrs.

Bruce-Maxwell, asking me to spend the week-end at Fairfields.

"I told the girls about it at Daisy's luncheon this afternoon, and they all think I am the luckiest person alive. They say Mrs. Bruce-Maxwell never has young girls out there, and it's always so gay and bright, with people coming and going, as they do in English novels."

"Have you answered her note?"

"Of course I wrote at once I should be perfectly delighted to come."

"Did you ask your father?"

"I told him about it, but he merely said: 'Be sure to take overshoes, daughter; April weather is uncertain.'"

"You said over the telephone that you wished to ask my advice about something. Why didn't you wait?"

"Oh, it wasn't about that. It was something else. I won a philopena from Mr. Birch, and to-day he sent me an exquisite fan and this little verse with it. You see how he calls me 'sweetheart' and names like that? If I wouldn't let him do it in a note in prose, does it make any difference because it is in poetry?"

"As your friend and confidential adviser, I can assure you that poetic license doesn't extend to calling a dear little girl 'names' when she doesn't like it. But I am thinking of this Fairfields visit."

He went out to the telephone in the hall, and called up Mrs. Bruce-Maxwell.

"Is it too late for me to retrieve myself? You have been gracious enough to give me an invitation to Fairfields and to leave the date open. May I come Saturday? No, thank you very much, but I can't get away a day earlier. In my own car. That is very good of you, Mrs. Bruce-Maxwell, but I deserve every word you said about my unsociability. You are very kind to let me break my bad habits. Thank you again. Good-by."

When he came back into the library, I knew he was going to kiss my hand even before he did.

"I deserve something. I've declined uncounted invitations to Fairfields, and now I deliberately invite myself. You're going to motor out Friday?"

"Yes, I'm going with Mr. Ellerton. He spends every week-end there."

"John K. Ellerton's son?" he quoted in Mrs. Hooper's voice.

I am so stupid about expressing things that I can't explain how nice his own voice sounded when he said:

"Good-by, little girl. If anything perplexes you while you're at Fairfields, come to me, dear."

Fairfields, April 17th.

I can't realize that it is only Sunday morning, for so much happens all the time here that it seems a week since I came Friday morning. Such happy hours, too, with every moment filled with fun and laughter. It is a big, beautiful place, and there are motors and saddle horses, and an artificial lake with boats on it. There are lots of people here, most of them friends of the Bruce-Maxwells from the North, but I'm the only young girl.

Mrs. Bruce-Maxwell is so fascinating that the men crowd around her just as if she wasn't married, and she has the prettiest clothes I ever dreamed of. She is an angel to have me here, for I know I seem silly, and I can't understand what they are talking about half the time. This morning I've been having a glorious gallop over the hills with Mr. Bruce-Maxwell. He is so clever, and I should like to be with him if he didn't call me "Little Greuze Girl," and "Lily Maid," and all sorts of names that sound as if I were still in the nursery. And he has a careless way of touching me. Of course it is accidental or thoughtless, and being married himself, he naturally has a kindly interest in young people. Only it is funny how I hate for people to touch me. Once he pinched my cheek. Another time he put his hand on my hair; and he said I jumped as if he had hit me with a croquet mallet.

I have never tasted champagne, and at dinner the first evening Mrs. Bruce-Maxwell said:

"Isn't there anything else you'd like,

Doris, if you don't care for champagne?"

I thought a moment, and then I said: "Once I tried some apollinaris."

They laughed at me, they always do. Saturday night there was a dance. Mr. Birch had sent me American Beauty roses, but they are such showy, buxom flowers I do not love them. Mr. Channing had sent snowdrops—the whitest little things! I never saw so many. I wore the simplest white frock I have because it seemed to suit the flowers. When I came into the ballroom, my confidential friend gave an odd gasp when he saw me—I hope it meant he liked the way I looked—and Mr. Birch said he couldn't find fault with me for slighting his roses, because no one could find fault with perfection.

Mr. Bruce-Maxwell danced with me a great deal. It must have pleased his wife to see him so thoughtful to an insignificant guest like me, because she would smile at me when she passed us in the waltz. She has tired eyes, they do not smile, but her mouth and teeth are so lovely that her laughter is like a bright flash.

It was after midnight when we sat down to supper, and I wondered what dad would think of my being in a ball dress Sunday morning. I said I wished it was nine o'clock and that we had three more hours to dance in, and Mrs. Bruce-Maxwell said something about the blessedness of youth.

"But you are young, too," I said. "I think you have the best time of anybody I ever knew. You dance and ride so wonderfully, you are so beautiful, and you have such a delightful home and such becoming clothes and so many beaus!"

"Good gracious, child, what a climax!" she laughed. "Wait until you're a safe, married party, and I'll have to resign in your favor."

"No," I said quite sadly, "I have a presentiment that the kind of husband I shall marry won't like for anybody to be in love with me but himself."

They laughed at me again, and somebody rose and toasted Mr. Bruce-Maxwell on the strength of it, but he raised his glass to me instead, and said: "I give you *l'enfant terrible!*"

An amazing thing happened as I started to go upstairs to bed. Mr. Ellerton had walked with me to the foot of the stairs. He said:

"I will be the kind of husband who won't want any other man to love you. Will you let me be?"

I was so utterly astonished I couldn't say a word for a moment, and he added:

"I could give you everything in the world you want."

"No, I don't think you could," I stammered, "for I am not sure what I want most, but I think it's something you couldn't give me."

"Marry me, Doris. I promise to make you happy; I promise to be true to you."

"You say that as if it were a New Year's resolution."

He looked as guilty as if I had read to the very bottom of his mind. I saw Mrs. Bruce-Maxwell saying good night to some one at the end of the corridor, so I shook my head and started up the steps. When I reached the upper landing I turned and looked down, and Mrs. Bruce-Maxwell was giving Mr. Ellerton the mauve orchid from her bodice. She was very beautiful as she stood looking up at him, but his face looked drawn and queer.

I hardly know whether it is worth telling Mr. Channing, for Mr. Ellerton didn't make love to me at all, merely asked me to marry him. I must confess that, though I have had a whole winter out, I cannot entirely understand men.

April 18th. Home.

How precious home is and darling dad! I don't ever want to go back to Fairfields—somehow I don't feel at home there, though everything is made so easy for everybody.

After dinner at Fairfields last night I was in a small room that opened on the loggia, talking with Mr. Bruce-Maxwell, Mr. Birch, and Mr. Channing.

The moon had risen early, and as we looked through the open arches into the night, I quoted:

"The moon was afloat,
Like a golden boat,
In the sea-blue depths of the sky,
When——"

I stopped short, and felt myself blushing.

"Do go on," Mr. Birch encouraged. "It must be a very naughty bit of *vers de société* to make you blush so adorably."

"Please finish it."

Mr. Channing's tone was more like a command, so I faltered out:

"When the Miller of Dee,
With his children three,
On his fat, red horse rode by."

It sounded so nurserylike that I hung my head, and Mr. Channing said to Mr. Birch:

"Did you actually think she knew something she was ashamed to repeat?"

"A Lit of Swinburne, perhaps?" suggested Mr. Bruce-Maxwell, laughing.

Eager to reinstate myself in their good opinion, I said: "Oh, I do know Swinburne a little. He is my favorite poet."

This time my confidential friend was the one to look surprised.

"Haven't you confused the name?" he asked, while the other men laughed.

"No. Dad gave me a book of his poems about children. I think they are the tenderest ever written, and I know many of them by heart. Don't you remember the one about a child's laughter? The lines seem actually to *ripple*. Only some one who loved children dearly could have written:

"'A baby's feet, like seashells pink,
Might tempt, should Heaven seem meet,
An Angel's lips to kiss, we think,
A baby's feet.
Like rose-hued sea flowers toward the heat
They stretch and spread and wink
Their ten soft buds that part and meet.'

"Can't you almost feel the baby in your lap, and see the little pink toes stretched to the fire?"

I broke off; I have grown so afraid of being laughed at. But this time none of them did.

"I greatly prefer your Miller of Dee's nice, bourgeois moon to Byron's, with a devil in it for mischief," remarked Mr. Birch. "Shall we go out on the loggia where we can get a better view?"

The other men protested, but Mr. Birch said Mr. Bruce-Maxwell and Mr. Channing had divided my afternoon between them, and to him alone not a crumb had been vouchsafed. So we went out and found chairs in a deep recess. The world looked very lovely in the half light, and Mr. Birch began to make love to me. I do not care for it nearly as much as I did at first. I like the sophomores better, because they don't keep bending over you and adjusting your wrap.

"Strange rumors reach me concerning the Orchid Lady, the Golden Knight, and the Lily Maid. What are you going to tell me about it?"

Of course I knew this foolishness meant Mrs. Bruce-Maxwell, who always wears orchids, Mr. Ellerton, and myself. It irritated me.

"I haven't any confidences to make. I don't tell things to anybody—except to Mr. Channing," I added truthfully.

"So the chevalier *sans peur et sans reproche* enters the field? Be careful, little girl! You may burn your pretty fingers, but he is asbestos proof against the divine fire. I'll admit he may be a strong trump if you and Nina are to play against each other."

"I don't know what you're talking about," I returned crossly. "Except that I don't think we ought to discuss our hostess."

"Shall I talk about *you*, instead of these tiresome fellows who are so appreciative of your charms? Shall I tell you that as you lean back in the moonlight, you look so ethereal, so flowerlike,

"'A man might venture all earthly bliss
And all his worldly wealth for this,
To lose his whole heart in one kiss
Upon her perfect lips.'"

With that he put his arm around me!

It all happened in a flash. I felt his arm about me, his face near me—and I

did—what I always did as a child. When I fought, I never used to scratch or slap the other children; I always pulled their hair. With the same instinct of self-protection, I jerked at his hair with all my might and main, and then I screamed—for it came off in my hand!

In a moment Mr. Channing and Mr. Bruce-Maxwell rushed from the adjoining room. There I stood holding Mr. Birch's graying hair, and right on top of his head was a round bald place.

"I thought I had scalped him," I sobbed.

"Literally or figuratively?" asked Mr. Bruce-Maxwell, with a broad grin.

I held out the hair. "Take it," I cried.

He did, but oh, you never saw anybody look so funny as he did, trying to be nonchalant, with that patch of hair in his hand. I have learned since that it is called a "scratch," and that not even his best friends knew he wore one.

"I think I need a B. & S., Bruce," he said. "I find kindergarten games rather exhausting."

Mr. Bruce-Maxwell looked at me as I stood there, gulping back the tears.

"Perhaps, Birch, we have both forgotten how many years lie between us and—snowdrops," he said. His voice was very kind.

He slipped his arm through Mr. Birch's and walked away with him.

Then I did an inexplicable thing. The moment they were gone, and I felt myself free from that dreadful man, I flung myself upon my poor friend, and cried until the lapel of his coat was all damp. I told him I didn't like for Mr. Bruce-Maxwell to call me pet names, or for Mr. Ellerton to talk about marrying me, and that I wanted to go home to dad. He patted and soothed me, and when I was comforted at last, he said:

"Now, Doris, tell me exactly what Birch did to frighten you."

"Why," I said, "he put his arm around me!"

I suppose I said it in a horrified way, for he just barely smiled, and then—all at once—it swept over me for the first time that I was in Mr. Channing's arms, and that I had fairly run into them.

"Oh!" I stammered. "I beg your pardon! I didn't mean to. Please don't think I am *fast!*"

He held me very close to him a moment, and then let me go, and said quietly:

"You are too tired and too shaken now to hear just what I think of you. But you leave Fairfields in the morning, thank Heaven, and to-morrow night in your own home I'll tell you everything. In the meantime, you will trust your friend to understand you? You know he could not be so evil as to misinterpret the precious impulse which humbles and exalts him?"

Then he kissed my hands, and we went back to the others. They were playing bridge at three or four tables, though it was Sunday, and I said good night to my hostess and slipped off to my room.

I was so thankful to get back to darling dad this morning that he said: "Why, little daughter, one would think you had returned from a transatlantic journey."

"Fairfields is even farther than that from you, dad," I replied, and wondered if Mr. Birch would call that "cryptic."

But oh, I am so ashamed, so ashamed! For, though I cannot remember clearly, I think I flung myself into Mr. Channing's arms, and it seemed so perfectly natural to be there. I didn't realize it was exacting too much of a friend.

April 19th.

He came just at "blind-man's holiday," that hour, especially sweet in springtime, just before the lights are lit. When I went into the room I was so abashed I could not look up, I could only remember my forward, unmaidenly conduct. But this time he ran toward me, and held me in his arms, *entirely* of his own free will.

"You are not afraid of me?" he kept whispering, as if it was so wonderful he couldn't altogether believe it. "You do not mind that I can feel your dear

heart beating against mine? You are not afraid or angry or sorry because I love you?"

I trembled, but I did not wish to draw away.

"But how can you be sure you love me," I asked, "when you do not even like the way I look?"

His low laughter was as tender as his voice. "I couldn't bribe you with pretty speeches, dearest. Not with flattery; not with gifts; I had to trust alone to the power of the love I give you to draw you to me. You did not know at Christmas, when I sent you a bunch of snowdrops, that I chose for you, too, a string of pearls and put it away with a prayer for the blessed day to come when I might clasp it around your white, white throat. Have you never divined that I think you the most exquisite, the most spotless, the most beautiful thing created in this world?"

It made me so radiantly happy that he must have read it in my face, for he kissed me. At least I'm glad I didn't do *that* first. But he did, on my eyes, my lips, my brow, my hair, as if each was so dear, so dear to him. I felt as if all the happiness in all the world was beating in my heart. He told me a thousand things, so precious and so sweet that they are in my memory for always. Then he said we were to be married soon, and I asked him when, and he said in about a month; and I asked if he couldn't possibly wait six weeks, because I should have so many things to do, and he was very obstinate about agreeing to this. He said he had wanted me for his wife when he first saw me the night of Grace's wedding, and more and more every day since.

"As you opened every corner of your heart to me, and I saw its divine youth and innocence, I felt myself wholly unworthy. But at Fairfields, when you came straight to me, unconscious as a homing bird, I felt that your need for me to shelter you might be as real as the cry of my heart for you."

When we went in to tell dad about it, Mr. Channing said:

"I want to have Doris to myself for a while, in peace and selfishness, so we plan to go abroad as soon as we are married, and we want you to come with us as far as Athens, and leave you there for an Attic summer. Unless you will promise this, I'm afraid I can't coax Doris to 'some unsequestered isle in far-off seas.'"

"It has long been a wish of mine to go," dad said.

"People will call you a fairy prince," I added. "You make dreams come true."

May 31st.

But they didn't. Instead, they called me "a little schemer who had made the match of the year"! We don't care. The days are too busy and too happy except just to live each golden moment as it comes. To-morrow, with June, and roses, and sunshine, dawns our wedding day!